

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

MAY 31, 2005

PRESENT: James Gage, David Hurley, Shawn Costello and Walter Moody

ABSENT: Jesse Amsel and Glenn Eberly

STAFF

PRESENT: Reanna Goodreau, Recording Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Costello called the Ellington Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE

III. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review of Age Restricted Cluster Housing Greenspace Plan: Development Services, LLC—Windermere Avenue, APN 017-004-0000 & 018-003-0000

Jay Fisher, Development Services, LLC, came forward to explain the project. He stated that he has spoken with the Planning & Zoning Commission, DEP, and Hockanum River Watershed Association in regards to the greenspace plan. Mr. Fisher noted that the requirement for greenspace in an age-restricted development is 20% with half of that allowed to be inland wetlands. He noted that they are reserving much more than 20% as greenspace. He reviewed the greenspace plan and explained that there will be a central green, trails to the Hockanum River and possibly a structure to allow access to the Hockanum River.

Andie Greene, project engineer, reviewed the existing site conditions. He stated that the 41.7 acre site is currently agricultural. He noted that the site could accommodate 144 units, but that they are only proposing 123 units. Mr. Greene explained that approximately 43% of the site will be maintained as greenspace and presented the plan. He noted that the greenspace includes 7 acres along the Hockanum River, 3 acres within the central corridor, and about 7 acres along the perimeter of the buildings. Chairman Costello asked about the buffers between the development and adjacent properties. Mr. Greene reviewed a cross section of a berm planted with evergreens and existing trees. The commission suggested additional plantings along the southern property line. Mr. Greene noted that the trail has not been formally planned, but that there is plenty of room for a trail. He also reviewed the stormwater detention. Commissioner Moody stated that he had reviewed the material selection for the plantings along the Hockanum River and commended the applicant for not having any invasive species included.

MOVED (MOODY), SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO SUPPORT THE GREENSPACE CONCEPT FOR THE AGE RESTRICTED CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED BY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, LLC LOCATED ON WINDERMERE AVENUE, APN 017-004-0000 & 018-003-0000.

2. Request from the Northern Connecticut Land Trust for Endorsement from the Conservation Commission for a Trail through Town-Owned Land (Letter & Map from Jim Gage, dated 5/11/05)

Commissioner Gage stated that he would need to recuse himself from voting and therefore the commission does not have enough members to vote on this item.

TABLED TO THE JUNE 28, 2005 MEETING.

3. Discussion of Audubon Society and Town-Owned Open Space Parcels

Chairman Costello stated that he has been talking with members of the Audubon Society about what was required to have a center in Ellington. He explained that the criteria for a site include the site having a diverse area, suitable parking, a kiosk, and a covered center or building. Chairman Costello noted that the Batz property seems to meet most of these requirements. He explained that he would be walking the site with a member of the Society to see if the site would be appropriate. The commission discussed what the ramifications would be if the Town gets involved with this venture, such as limited hours to access to site.

4. Discussion of the Establishment of a Subcommittee for Fundraising

Commissioner Hurley noted that there are people interested in advocating for support of the town allocating monies for the purchase of open space lands. He noted that Tolland has a group that advocates for open space purchases and it has no affiliation with the Conservation Commission. Chairman Costello stated that since the group would have no affiliation with the Conservation Commission, it should be removed from the agenda.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE ESTABLISHING A SUBCOMMITTEE.

MOVED (HURLEY), SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA: DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PLACEMENT OF DEED RESTRICTIONS ON LAND ACQUIRED BY USING OPEN SPACE FUNDS.

5. Discussion Regarding the Placement of Deed Restrictions on Land Acquired by Using Open Space Funds

Commissioner Hurley wanted to know if there were any ordinances that required deed restrictions on lands purchased for open space. Commissioner Gage stated that the State

requires a conservation easement when a state grant is used by the town to purchase open space. Commissioner Gage offered to get copies of deeds of lands that were purchased for open space purposes in order for the commission to review for any deed restrictions.

Commissioner Hurley stated that if there are no requirements for deed restrictions, the commission should propose a requirement to the Board of Selectmen. He explained that if the parcel is purchased for open space purposes then it should stay that way for perpetuity.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion with the Hockanum River Watershed Association (HRWA) re:
Implementation of a Trail System by the HRWA

Chairman Costello explained that he has not had a chance to speak with Ms. Gross. He requested that this item be removed from the agenda until he has a chance to speak with her.

2. Discussion of Town-Owned Open Space Parcels:
 - a. Shenipsit Street, APN 021-031-0005 (Tyler Drive Private Road Subdivision)
 - b. Stein Road, APN 037-005-0082 (Ellington Highlands Subdivision)

Commissioner Gage stated that he had a chance to walk the parcel on Shenipsit Street and that it had great views, but that the access was difficult. He noted that he had spoken with two abutters of the open space and that one was interested in doing a land swap to allow for a better access to the open space parcel and that the other was interested in acquiring some of the land. Commissioner Moody suggested speaking with the Audubon Society about this parcel as well. Chairman Costello didn't think that this parcel would fit the Audubon Society's criteria. Commissioner Hurley suggested that this parcel may be utilized more if the access was more defined. He requested topography maps for the parcels that the commission has reviewed so far. The commission agreed to review multiple parcels every month to see if they fit into the open space plan or should be sold in order to purchase more valuable open space lands.

MOVED (GAGE), SECONDED (MOODY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA: DISCUSSION OF FEE IN-LIEU OF OPEN SPACE.

3. Discussion of Fee In-Lieu of Open Space

Commissioner Gage handed-out and reviewed a letter he wrote to the Town Planner regarding an appraisal for the Angel Trace subdivision. He believes that the fee in-lieu of open space is an important funding for open space acquisition. He explained that the DEP requires an appraisal current within 6 months. Chairman Costello agreed that the Planning & Zoning Commission should not be getting outdated appraisals, but wanted to ensure that the applicant wasn't put at a disadvantage if the approval process went longer than the timeframe for the appraisal.

Commissioner Hurley agreed that appraisals should be current, but that he has concerns about the Town Attorney's response regarding the "appraiser list."

MOVED (GAGE), SECONDED (MOODY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RECOMMEND TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION THAT THE PZC REQUIRE APPRAISALS

THAT ARE CURRENT WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS FROM THE TIME THAT THE PZC ACCEPTS FEE IN-LIEU OF OPEN SPACE.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

1. Executive Session for Purposes of Discussing Possible Land Purchase

Chairman Costello requested removing this item from the agenda until the commission has a parcel to discuss.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

- a. Approval of Meeting Minutes:
 - a. April 26, 2005 Regular Meeting Minutes

MOVED (GAGE), SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE APRIL 26, 2005 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

- b. May 24, 2005 Special Meeting Minutes

MOVED (HURLEY), SECONDED (MOODY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MAY 24, 2005 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES.

1. Correspondence:
 - a. Memo to PZC from Matt Davis, dated 4/25/05 (Planimetrics Draft Proposal)
 - b. Memo to Land Use Commissions from Matt Davis, dated 5/2/05 (Proposed FY 05-06 Budget Requests)
 - c. Memo to Dennis Milanovich & BOS from Matt Davis, dated 5/4/05 (CONNDOT Land Donation)
 - d. Memo to Land Use Boards from Matt Davis, dated 5/16/05 (Cornerstone Settlements)
 - e. Memo to PZC from Matt Davis, dated 5/26/05 (Appraisers)
 - f. CFL News, Spring 2005

SO NOTED.

Chairman Costello stated that he had received an agenda for a special Board of Selectmen meeting for June 16, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Crystal Lake monitoring. He stated that all members were invited to attend.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (MOODY), SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Reanna Goodreau, Recording Secretary